



Bradley crews of the 1st Infantry Division prepare to move their vehicles into firing positions during predeployment training at Grafenwöhr.

C LIMBING the slope to a group of small plywood houses in the replicated village of Vitina, Kosovo, soldiers of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade dodged "fire" that originated from a bunker surrounded by pop-up targets.

In this mock patrol at the Grafenwöhr Training Area in Germany, the infantrymen responded instinctively with precise machine gun and rifle fire.

The live-fire assault was only a small portion of the train-up exercise the Schweinfurt, Germany-based soldiers of the division's 18th and 26th Inf. regiments underwent to prepare for their current peacekeeping duties in Kosovo.

Their May arrival in the Balkans marked the division's return to Task Force Falcon for the first time since division units left the beleaguered country in December 2000. Those units had been the first to enter Kosovo

Former Soldiers magazine staffer MSG Larry Lane is public affairs NCOIC for the 1st Infantry Division.

Return to Kos

Story and Photos by
MSG Larry Lane

after the air war there ended in June 1999.

Presence Patrols

"We're in Kosovo to enforce the peace and keep everything quiet," said 1st Bn., 18th Inf., CSM John Calpena. But, while everything is relatively quiet, "everyone's on edge wondering if something's going to happen as an offshoot of terrorism elsewhere in the world."

The 1st Inf. Div. soldiers are conducting primarily reconnaissance missions from various checkpoints and patrolling the streets to reaffirm their presence.

The greatest challenge, Calpena said in May, is dealing with increased

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criminal activity that historically occurs in the spring, when new coalition-force units transition into the region and criminals among the Kosovar population think they have a better chance of doing such things as smuggling, without being detected.

"They've been watching the military rotations for a couple of years," Calpena said, "so they know when troops will be replaced."

Drawing on Experience

Veterans such as weapons squad leader SSG Phillip Calkins draw from the experience of previous deployments to emphasize soldiers' need to be vigilant.

"In Operation Desert Storm, we knew we were going up against armor and trenches," Calkins said. "In Kosovo, we have to deal with lots of people in lots of villages. We can't really tell if people are going to be hostile toward us, and we really have to be alert at all times."

The predeployment live-fire exercises the units underwent were thus essential to the soldiers' readiness, Calkins said. "Because, despite the present peace, soldiers could be fired upon while patrolling the streets."

SGT Daniel Williams was a private during his first Kosovo rotation in 1999. This time the squad leader is responsible for guiding other soldiers.

The movement-to-contact drills he practiced before his unit deployed helped him hone skills in land navigation, radio communications and engaging an enemy, Williams said. The training also helped illustrate what



Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, assault a bunker during live-fire movement-to-contact training.

than it was three years ago, and the development of efficient facilities makes the current operation much easier, he said.

Nonetheless, COL Peter Palmer, 2nd Bde. commander and the deputy commander for maneuver in Kosovo, said his engineers and tankers are challenged in the infantry role.

Engineers to Infantry

The 54th Engineer Bn., a mechanized battalion of the 130th Engineer Bde., reorganized to become the "fifth company" of the 1st Bn., 18th Inf.

Before deploying, the soldiers honed basic infantry rifle-squad drills and other skills they're now using as a temporary division asset.

"It's a unique experience to be an engineer and be reorganized as infantry, our secondary role," said platoon sergeant SFC Brad Schneider, who relied on his experiences in Desert Storm to help him prepare for Kosovo.

The engineers, who set up traffic-control points, are inspecting vehicles, confiscating weapons caches, thwarting smuggling attempts and guarding a Serbian church, Schneider said.

PFC Larry Doll, a Bradley driver, is perfecting his driving skills, he said. In the process, he's become part of what he calls a "tight team."

"I never thought I'd be going to Germany. And I never thought about Kosovo before I joined the Army," Doll added.

SPC Jeremy Krebs, who trained as a gunner for the first time with the 1st

Bn., 26th Inf., said the most important element of training and preparing for deployment is to work as a team.

The skills Bradley crews developed on the firing range at Grafenwöhr give them the confidence they need to have in their weapon systems, he said. Additionally, the train-up afforded crews an opportunity to get to know each other, each other's style and how the group works as a whole. □

A 1st Bn. soldier motions to his team members as they approach an "enemy bunker complex" during the Grafenwöhr training.



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his soldiers would have to do individually and how he, as a leader, would operate under stressful situations.

Task Force Falcon commander BG Douglas E. Lute described the 1st Inf. Div.'s first deployment to Kosovo as a "very confused, chaotic and fluid situation." Kosovo is more peaceful